



LOS ANGELES POLICE DEPARTMENT USE OF FORCE-TACTICS DIRECTIVE

Directive No. 9.2

April 2014

NARCOTICS INGESTION

PURPOSE

The purpose of this Directive is to provide procedural guidelines and consistent definitions to employees who come into contact with persons who are believed to have ingested narcotics.

The Department's primary objective in dealing with suspects who are believed to have ingested narcotics is the preservation of life. The secondary objective is to preserve and recover evidence whenever possible. Officers who are involved in narcotics enforcement or who contact persons suspected of ingesting or attempting to ingest narcotics must have clear guidelines upon which they can rely to make sound decisions. Understandably, officers involved in enforcement of narcotics laws have a duty to timely investigate narcotic violations and process arrestees. Often, suspects fearing arrest will ingest or attempt to ingest controlled substances to avoid prosecution. The Department has a responsibility to ensure that suspects who face a potential medical emergency receive the necessary medical attention, regardless of the impact to the investigation. Consequently, experience has revealed that narcotic suspects may be at risk if they *chewed* a narcotic for sufficient time to allow for ingestion (absorption) to occur, regardless of whether they actually swallowed the narcotic.

PROTOCOL

When an employee reasonably believes that a detainee or arrestee has ingested a narcotic (swallowed or chewed on the substance for any period of time, versus merely holding the substance in their mouth), which could present a health hazard, the employee shall summon a Los Angeles Fire Department (LAFD) Rescue Ambulance (RA) for assessment and treatment without unreasonable delay. If such incident occurs during an ongoing tactical incident, officers should consider moving the suspect out of an unsecured area to an LAFD staging area in order to expedite treatment.

Potential Signs of Distress

- Loss of consciousness
- Semi consciousness
- Apparent trouble breathing
- Choking
- Profuse sweating
- Non-responsiveness (mental state)
- Loss of mobility (apparent inability to move or walk)
- Vomiting
- Extreme hyperactivity
- Extremely violent conduct
- Apparent imperviousness to pain (*super-human strength*)

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Employees should ask the suspect if he or she has swallowed a narcotic and encourage an honest reply by explaining the serious consequences of swallowing narcotics. When such measures are taken in a timely manner, they may save the life of suspects who unknowingly place themselves at serious risk of severe injury or death due to overdose.

When the suspect has been detained or is in custody, officers can use reasonable methods or techniques to prevent the suspect from swallowing a narcotic. Examples of such techniques are tilting the arrestee's head downwards (chin towards chest), and/or holding the suspect's nose closed by pinching the nostrils to prevent swallowing. Officers shall not apply any direct force or pressure to the neck or throat of any person to prevent them from swallowing narcotics.

When an arrestee or detainee who is in custody has been transported to a medical facility after ingesting narcotics, the arresting officers shall:

- Notify a supervisor as soon as practical;
- Respond to the medical facility;
- Advise the attending physician of the situation, including an estimate of the amount of time elapsed since the narcotic was ingested, and if possible, the type, quantity, and packaging of the narcotic ingested;
- Attempt to obtain a signed Medical Release Form from the arrestee or detainee;
- Book any evidence obtained as a result of the medical treatment in accordance with established procedures;
- Include in any related report a detailed statement of the incident, medical treatment received, and attach any medical record; and,
- Seek advice from the Watch Commander or Detective Watch Commander on whether to maintain custody of the suspect, or how to properly release the suspect and pursue (or decline) prosecution.

DEFINITIONS

Absorption: The assimilation of something into the body.

Ingestion: To take into the body by the mouth for digestion or absorption.

Narcotic: Any class of substances or drugs that reduces pain, induces sleep and may alter mood or behavior, that are also illegal.

Note: For definition purposes in this context, the term "narcotics" although not technically accurate, will be used to refer to any drug or controlled substance.

Narcotic suspects: Suspects arrested or detained for any narcotics related investigations or violations.

CONCLUSION

Often, suspects fearing arrest will ingest or attempt to ingest controlled substances to avoid prosecution. Consequently, experience has revealed that narcotic suspects may be at risk if they *chewed* a narcotic for sufficient time to allow for ingestion (absorption) to occur, regardless of whether they actually swallowed a narcotic. The Department has a responsibility to ensure that suspects who face a potential medical emergency receive the necessary medical attention, regardless of the impact to the investigation.

Points to Remember

- Only reasonable techniques may be used to prevent swallowing of narcotics
- Primary objective is preservation of life
- Secondary objective is recovery of evidence
- Advise the suspect of the risk of overdose
- Call RA if ingestion is believed to have occurred

Important Reminder

Deviation from these basic concepts sometimes occurs due to the fluid and rapidly evolving nature of law enforcement encounters and the environment in which they occur. Deviations may range from minor, typically procedural or technical, to substantial deviations from Department tactical training. Any deviations are to be explained by the involved officer(s), and justification for substantial deviation from Department tactical training shall be articulated and must meet the objectively reasonable standard of the Department's Use of Force policy.

AMENDMENTS

This version replaces Use of Force-Tactics Directive No. 9.1, Narcotics Ingestion, March 2013.



CHARLIE BECK
Chief of Police

DISTRIBUTION "A"